

Brethren Evangelist

"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

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THE NEW YEAR

We congratulate all our readers who have successfully escaped the multitude of perils which environ our frail humanity in its pilgrimage thru this world, and find themselves by God's mercy standing upon the threshold of the new year, strong in physical health, elastic in spirit, undismayed by the failures and defeats of the past, hopeful for the future, courageous to enter whatever conflict and labor that the future may hold in store, and eager to win what victories are possible to diligence and faith. It is a grand spectacle to see a man gathering about him all those mental and spiritual resources which growth and experience have placed within his reach. The past years have taught him how much he needs every help, and every atom of strength, every illumination of wisdom, and yet how inadequate, after all his forces have assembled, is he to the tremendous struggle of life. How little has he been able in the past to control the irresistible current of circumstances. He has been borne on its tide like a leaf on the billows of a deluge. Nevertheless he is conscious of the vast distance between the partial prosperity of his own life, and the total disasters and irremedial wrecks which everywhere strew the shores of time. What has made this difference between his present situation of comparative hopefulness, of comparative success, and the depths of the abyss into which so many that he can recall have plunged? He has held, tho perhaps with a feeble grasp, to the chain of an anchor. He has used, tho perhaps with intermittent earnestness and comparative feebleness of purpose, the inexhaustible resources of faith and wisdom. Perhaps he has even struggled against the current with something which might indulgently be likened to perseverance and energy. It may be that he has even reached up to take hold of the strong Hand which is held down out of the supernal refuge to every son and daughter of man who will see it, and who will grasp it in the hour of extremity. And so he finds himself—standing upon the threshold of the new year no less a man, panoplied in all the strength, the sanity, the dignity, the hopefulness, the fine energy of a solvent manhood; no less a child of God, in spite of many contradictions, of much shortcomings, of much entanglement with the world, dimness of vision and trepidation of spirit,—nor less a man, nor less a Christian,—than he was a year ago when he stood with mingled feelings of hopefulness and humiliation upon the threshold of the new year that has vanished.

Not less? Perhaps it is victory to be able to say

that much, but not a victory that we can shout over, and rend the welkin with loud jubilation. Entrenched as we are in the enemy's country, with our communications often interrupted, and often separated as we are from our base of supplies, it may be a great achievement to be able to hold our ground. Down upon us rush the confident and insolent forces of evil, upon our front and flank, and the battle is sore, and many are wounded, and many desert the field. Honor is doubtless due to the soldier who against such odds has stood his ground and held his own, but not that measure of honor which belongs to the aggressive soldier who charges to the front, and at the close of each day, at the close of each year, finds himself occupying new positions, advanced new ground, strewn with the dead and wounded of the enemy's victims of his puissant arm. This is the one soldier out of many who for himself has made the discovery that his general, the Captain of his salvation, never fights in the trenches, but always in the open, always leading in the charge, always penetrating the serried ranks of the foe, and always scattering his powers as the autumn blast scatters the leaves of the forest, and strews them far and wide upon the ground. With his eye upon this glorious Captain, and following hard in his footsteps, the happy soldier no longer fears the grim array of Lucifer, but finds that "one can chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight," when the object of their sublime faith is that invincible Leader before whom the powers of darkness melt away as the shadows flee before the rising sun.

If it is therefore possible to be more a man, more a Christian, if it is but just barely possible, should we be content short of the achievement? If discontent is the spur of industry, and of genius, should it not be equally armed with thorns to make unquiet that bed of ease upon which so many Christians recline with ignoble satisfaction? Let us stir up in ourselves and in others that glorious discontent which leads to nobler and higher achievements in every laudable sphere of human effort. For the coming year it is resolved that we be better preachers, better pastors, better elders, better deacons, better citizens, better Christians, than we have ever yet been, that we prove all the possibilities of faith, that we test all the resources of experience and wisdom, that we improve all the opportunities of service, that we brighten the home, revive the church, and illumine the darkness around us with the light of a sanctified life.